

# Inner Voice Issue Two



Bovine Cranium Productions

# **Inner Voice**

Vol. 1 Issue 2 (revised June 7, 2005)  
Feb. 2004

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Inner Voice Contact info via the web and ordinary mail service

[peteramthor@trulyrural.com](mailto:peteramthor@trulyrural.com)

Please put “Inner Voice” in the subject line.

John Nixon  
PO Box 114  
Potosi MO 63664

For submission guidelines please check out the Truly Rural website.

<http://www.trulyrural.com/>

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## **Monotone Introduction**

By PeterAmthor

Well I don't know how but here is the second issue of Inner Voice. With the release of the first issue just a little over a month ago I didn't expect to put this issue out as soon. But it filled up pretty quickly and people were asking me about it. So I put my nose to the grindstone talked to some folks and got it rolling. So here you have it with a quickness.

Now you may notice that three of the six articles are done by me. Well that wasn't originally the plan but two of them are continued from the first issue while the third is a review that needs to go out as soon as possible. Another thing you may notice is that three of the articles in this issue have to do with Kult. This is due to the fact that there is a lack of submissions of anything else. So if you if you want some more variety please send in your material. It's all welcome here. Fiction, reviews of just about anything, material for just about any game. We'll take it all.

Based off some of the responses I've gotten from the last issue there have been a few changes to the way everything is being put together in this issue. A lot of little things. First off a temporary website has been set up on geocities. This is only going to be used until I can get around to getting a domain name and some webspace to host everything on, probably do that in a few months. I may set up a donate option so people can help me support the site and the costs that will ensue. Right now the site has the info on downloading the current issues and submission information. Future sections will include in a set of index's categorizing all the articles and reviews. The contact email has been set up based off the temp site, this is better than using my own email address and gives it a little more "professional" look.

Lots of little thing got pointed out to me as well. I didn't put a release date on the first issue. The table of contents may work better with everything being divided up by type. Leaving the cover art without blurbs about what's inside since this is a web production and not something on the newsstands. A little thing a little thing there. Keeping track of it all to help me make this ezine better.

One thing that keeps getting asked though is what exactly is Inner Voice supposed to be? Is a gaming thing, a fiction thing, or what?

Yes and no. It's a creativity thing. I want it to focus on things that require imagination and thought to put together. Gaming just happens to be the one thing that I have a lot of material for already. But I am hoping for a more broad selection to draw from in the future. Starting next time there will be at least one comic review in each issue, even if I have to write them myself (already have three ready to go).

Now what is needed for this to happen is that people need to submit more material. Reviews are more than welcome, for music, games, comics, movies, whatever you want to do a review of, just send it in. The broader the range of material in these

electronic pages the more audience it appeals to. The more audience it appeals to the more folks who may download it. The more folks who download it the more people who may submit material. The more material, well the sooner the next issue comes out. So there is the whole circle that I am looking at.

But that's not all that Inner Voice is. One other thing that it was set up to be is a showcase. It's a place for artists and writers to put their work at to get more notice. This will be come increasingly apparent once the site gets more work done to it. One of things that will be there will be a listing of the folks who have submitted material and the contact information they want to have listed. This way is somebody looks through an issue and your work catches their eye they have a way of getting in touch with you.

So that's the general over view that I've been telling people who ask. It covers the main points of this file that you are looking through right now. I've had some mixed responses to the whole theory. Everything from it sounds great to it will never work. Well come what may I intend to keep it going one way or the other. Even if that means I'm the only one submitting work to it and the new issue only comes out once a year. It will still be here.

As always any suggestions, ideas or input are very welcome. Simply drop a line to me at the email listed on the table of contents page and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Until then spread the word and send some work.

Later,  
PeterAmthor



**Story out of Sequence**  
**Part Two "Preparation"**  
**By PeterAmthor**

The brush glided along the floor leaving a trail of purplish red behind it. It turned, created circles, moved off at angles. Slowly the lines are laid down and each with its own purpose. Each stroke almost seemed random while it was being laid down and yet the finished product looked entirely predetermined. When all is done the brush is dropped into the jar holding the excess paint that was not used.

Robert stood back and gave a slow glance over his handiwork. It looked complete and, most importantly, perfect. He put the lid back on the glass container holding the specially mixed paint, leaving the brush inside, and placed it back on the altar. The mix must be kept separate from all the others, each has its own special ingredients and one would ruin the other if they were ever to come into contact.

"Well is it ready?" Tonya finally spoke up. She leaned forward out of the shadows of the far corner looking directly at his face. "Are you ready to start now?"

Robert moved only his eyes to look at her keeping his head facing the floor, "Why are you so eager to look at death? That is where you want to go isn't it?" She stood in silence at his words. "The realm of the spirits the home to those who have died. Called by many names such as hell, purgatory, limbo and countless others by those who have seen it or are bound there."

"You told me all this before Robert. Why do you keep saying it again and again? Do you think I am suddenly going to have second thoughts and back out?"

"If you are so ready then begin lighting the candles around the circle, and be careful not to smudge the symbols when you walk." He turned from the altar, holding a worn black leather book in his hands. It was made by his own hands, even the paper then

stitched together slowly over time, it was something wholly his own. "The slightest damage to them could get us bound there as well. What they do to people who don't belong there is beyond reason and imagination to those who are still alive." Tonya looked at him with wide eyes and a face that was slowly filling with the emotion of fear. "Well are you still so anxious to go?"

"Of course, I have to do this." She tried to put on a sterner face but her eyes showed the fear that was building within her. He stared at her for a few minutes. Then looked back towards the floor. "Are you getting afraid yourself is that the problem?" She blurted it out in a louder voice than before, attempting still yet to summon up her courage.

"Now you do know that if we find him and successfully bring him back he may not be the same person that he was before?"

"What are you talking about? You told me that we will get his soul, the only soul he's ever had, not a copy or dupe of any kind, but HIM! So it will be the same person as it was before, it will be my father!"

"Oh yes it will be your father. But... he may not be like you remember him."

"What are you talking about?"

Robert turns towards her; she can feel his eyes like needles upon her face. Its like this every time he about to get really serious. "He has spent some time in hell, his own personal hell. This is something that nobody can ever be fully prepared for. In that place minutes can seem like days on end, eternities could pass in a single days time. Nobody walks away from that unchanged." He takes another couple steps through the symbol, careful not to touch a single brush stroke. "I know this from experience."

"What, you mean you've died and came back yourself?"

"No. I've brought somebody back before, and she changed more than I could deal with. Fortunately for the both of us her changes also made me less desirable to her. So in the end me the person I went to hell and back for decided that we were no longer meant to be together. So much for love eternal and undying eh?"

"Well that's a risk I am willing to take for my father. He means everything to me."

"Alright then lets begin the final preparations. I will need your help to move your fathers casket out here into the center, its currently in the side room there."

Face draining of color she follows his finger to a set of double doors on the side of the room. "You mean his body? You've got his body in that room?"

"Of course. I mean, his soul has to go somewhere when we bring him back doesn't it then?"

**ALL AT ONCE**  
**Part 2**  
**Sla Industries fiction**

**By Derek Stoelting**

"Hey, Mia. Did I ever tell you about the time I was down at Silverbrook?"

"No, and I'm not going to let you. I'll start at the other end of the bar. You start here." Mia walks away from Talston before he has a chance to say anything.

"Damn it. She never lets me finish." Talston looks at the long line of patrons hanging about the bar. He scans a small group of female Wraith Raiders and saunters up to them.

"Pardon me, ladies." The female Wraith Raiders halt their conversation and glare at the Brain Waster. "I, uh, was wondering if you might know a Marie D'Leal? Likes to hang out here. Slim build, long, straight hair, hangs with the Masters of the Hunt."

The Wraith Raiders go back to their previous discussion, ignoring Talston.

He takes a step closer. "Hey. I asked you a question. Would you mind having the dignity to answer it?"

"Take off, wastoid," replies one of the older Wraith Raiders.

Talston takes yet another step forward, bringing himself within striking distance of the Wraith Raiders.

Talston's face puffs up as his temper begins to climb. "Listen, Cat-Woman. I asked a simple question. How \*\*\*\*\* hard is it to answer a simple question? Can't you stupid cold-bitches handle that, or is it too simple for you to understand?"

The five Wraith Raiders stand up as one. Talston's face becomes a bit more pale. He pulls his hands out of his pockets and places them on his hips, and looks up at the Wraith Raiders. "Still can't hear me?"

One of the younger Wraith Raiders speaks up, "Oh, we heard you, you sorry excuse for an Ebon. Your question is far too simple for the likes of us. So, we're going to go dance. If you're still here when we get back, we'll be happy to introduce you to our "cat fingernails."

"Dumb-ass," says another of the Wraith Raiders as they walk away.

"Fuggit. I need a drink," says Talston turning for the bar.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Pardon me," shouts Mia at a male Wraith Raider. He glances over the top of his drink at her. "Do you know a Marie D'Leal?" The male Wraith Raider shakes his head, "no" and goes back to his drink. Mia continues down the bar asking the patrons if they know the girl.

"Yeah, I know Marie. What do you want with her?" asks an overly thin female Wraith Raider.

"I've been hired to find her." Mia shows her Slop badge. "Her parents are concerned. They haven't seen her for awhile."

"Well, I haven't seen her in a few days. I just know that she likes to hang out with the Masters and they like to hang here."

"Are any of these "Masters" here right now?"

The Wraith Raider leans up and looks about the club. She pauses, noticing the two Ebons on the dance floor. "Man, aren't those two a pair?" Mia glances in the direction the Wraith Raider is looking. Rodriguez and Terling are working the dance floor, hoping to find a lead. "No, I don't see any of the masters."

"Do they wear colors of any type?"

"Not really. They all have a weird necklace pendant thingy they wear. It's a circlet with various peices of metal crossing through it."

"Alright. Thanks." Mia drops enough unis to cover the next couple of drinks for the Wraith Raider.

Mia notices that she is only a few people away from Talston and heads down to see if he's had any better luck.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hey, lady. Lady!" shouts Talston.

Isis looks over to Talston. "What?" she asks sarcasticly.

"Do you know Marie D'Leal?"

"Marie D'Leal? The name's familiar." She repeats the name to herself a few times. "Oh, yeah. Likes to hang out with Azibo."

"Who's Azibo?"



She takes a drink of her Blizzard, before continuing. "He's one of the Masters of the Hunt. A gang that likes to hang out here. What do you want with them?"

"Well, I've got a large amount of money that I need to get to Marie, but I can't seem to find her." Talston leans over to the bartender and orders a drink for himself, and one for Isis.

"Really? Her parents die or something? I hear her father is really loaded." Isis puts her drink down, empty.

"No one has died, or at least, not that I know of. Seems that somebody she worked for died, and he left her in the will." He drops enough money to cover the drinks and then some on the bar.

"You have got to be kidding me? Somebody that little tramp worked for liked her?"

"Yeah, sure. Why not?" Talston begins his fourth drink for the evening. "Why'd you call her a tramp?"

"Because everyone knows that she's slept with every male in Masters. She gets around more than they do - as a group."

"Wow." Talston lets an uncomfortable silence fall between them to see how she handles it.

"Say, what did you say your name was?"

"Oh. I didn't. It's Talston. What's yours?"

"Isis."

Talston smiles and takes another drink.

"Well, Talston. I know where some of the Masters hang out when their not here. I could take you there. If you'd like."

Talston pauses to act like he is thinking it out. "Sure, why not." He puts down his empty drink. "I'll warn you though. I'm not carrying the money on me. So, if you're thinking of luring old Talston out on the street and then taking off with the money, let's put a stop to that right now."

"Shit. This place is dead tonight. I just want to get out of here. You got a vehicle or are we gonna have to call for a ride?" Isis puts her almost empty drink down on the bar.

"Naw, I got a ride. It'll be waiting out front by the time we get there." Talston gives Isis a

million uni smile. Talston pulls his phone out and sends out a broadcast to the team.  
"Cameron, pull the car around. I'd like to leave now."

Isis arches her eyebrows in silent anticipation.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hey, Mia," calls out Terling. Mia looks up from tracking Talston. Noticing the Ebon heading straight for her, she stops walking.

"What's up?"

"Nothing." Terling sighs. "Neither Roddy or I can get a thing to go on. Are you having any luck?"

"Other than a few phone numbers for future possible dates, and a few facts we already know, no. I'm not having any better luck than you two. Hopefully, Talston is having better luck than we are."

"I doubt it. You know how Talston seems to get on everyone's nerves."

"True."

Mia and Terling both wince, as their radio receivers crackle in their ears. Talston's voice echoes forth. "Cameron, pull the car around. I'd like to leave now."

"I wonder what's up?" asks Terling as he looks around for the Brain Waster.

"I thought I saw him talking to a young Wraith a minute ago. Oh, there he is," Mia nods her head towards the stairs. "Looks like he has her in tow. That's odd. He hates Wraith Raiders." She shrugs and starts walking for the stairs.

Terling yells at her as she walks away. "I'll grab Roddy and meet you out front."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Wow. You have your own driver?" asks Isis.

"No. He's a friend. He didn't want to come in out of the rain tonight. Claims the rain keeps him awake."

"Weird."

Talston and Isis mount the stairwell to the entrance/exit. Talston silently hopes that the rest of the squad heard his message. Normally, he would not broadcast something like that. However, he does not wish to scare off the young Wraith Raider.

Midway up the stairs, the club's music begins skipping through songs. The music's volume increases and decreases at odd intervals. The lights begin flashing in odd patterns. Then all goes dark and the crowd on the dancefloor goes quiet.

All at once, the music, lights, and fog machines kick on. The dancefloor erupts in a frenzy of motion. They seem to love the mini-thrill the DJ cooked up for them. At the bar, most of the patrons appear to be irritated that their conversations were interrupted just to excite those dancing.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You know Marie?"

"Marie who?" asks the frightened DJ.

"Marie D'Leal."

The DJ looks down at the massive hand holding on to the front of his shirt. "Nope. Never heard of her."

"You sure?" asks the Stormer.

"Listen you stupid vat-grown shit. I said I ain't ever heard of her. Not let go of me before I call see-cure-ih-tee. Got that?"

"Yes." Burn places his other hand on the DJ's shirt. "Now, Burn ask you, again." Burn picks up the scrawney DJ and places him on top of his equipment. The club's music skips about uncontrollably. Lights flick and fade. "Have you," Burn lifts the DJ off of the control panel counter, "ever heard of Marie D'Leal?" and then slams the DJ back onto the control panel counter.

All at once, the music, lights, and fog machine turn on. Burn ignores the effect and the crowd screaming for more. "Well. Do you remember or do I need to remind you some more?" He picks the DJ back up and holds him up in the air.

"I know her. Yeah, yeah. Marie. Hangs out at Mal's Bar. It's in Downtown. I don't know which district." Sweat and piss roll down the DJ's body.

Burn growls at the DJ, baring his teeth.

"Okay, okay. It's in district 66F. You can't miss it. It's the only bar with a working sign in the district."

"That all?"

"Yes. Yes, that's it."

"Okay." Burn lets go of the DJ, dropping him almost a meter to the ground. The DJ crumples and crawls over to a corner of his booth. Burn opens the door and walks out of the booth.

...to be continued.

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Futura 2003 by Jacinto Quesnel (jhas777)

# Yoshiko

by Torben Rygg of [http://kultklan.has.it\\_torb\\_@hotmail.com](http://kultklan.has.it_torb_@hotmail.com)  
Vaguely based on the description of 'Tipareths Sändebud' in Mörkrets Legioner (©Äventyrsspel 1991)

There was a slow drizzle down Tokyos trading districts, making the rows of endless neon signs reflect distortedly in puddles of clear rainwater on the cobbles. Only small groups of people moved through the streets this night, some loners, most of them neglecting the rain completely. One of them was Akira Takeiaki, a catholic priest, wearing his cloak, \*\*\*blowing gently in the wind.

The guilt he felt for betraying his father in his choice of religious conviction had left him with one choice - to honor his father, and do a great sin. He had thought about it often, but prayed in silent nights in the church and won his faith back. His faith in life.

There are times when events make sudden turns in your life, sometimes even sudden ends. Such was the case when a boyhood friend and burglar had confessed his sins to Takeiaki in church two nights ago. He had handed in a loaded gun, a Glock 19, for the priest to hand in to the police. The burglar had only planned to use the weapon as a threat, but when you face a barrel at seven metres distance, it suddenly narrows down: it's kill, or get killed.

Takeiaki felt the grip of the gun underneath his robe as he paused to read the sign of a huge highriser in glass and red bricks, Nakamura Trading. He went into the building, where two security guards sat behind a huge desk which looked more like the bar of a Hilton restaurant. Takeiaki went up to the guards leaving a trail of water behind him, and bowed politely.

"I am here to see Yoshiko Nakamura. I have no appoinment, but if you tell her that there is a catholic priest named Takeiaki to see her, I am sure she will see me quite urgently."

"Ok, I'll see what I can do Mr. Takeiaki." One of the security men hit a button in the control desk and mumbled something. He hit the button again and looked towards the priest.

"Takeiaki, follow me, and I will take you to Mrs. Nakamura." He went in front of the priest and urged him forward with hand motions. Only when they had entered the elevator and it had started escalating towards the 78th floor Takeiaki noticed that the guard did not only have a huge Mag-Lite, but also handcuffs and a gun at his hip in a black holster. He felt lucky he couldn't sweat with all the damp water in his face, but his nervousity shone right through, you could see that his eyes were worried, his skin pale.

The elevator stopped and opened doors into a huge hall with marble floors and corked walls, tables made of japanese cherry-trees, paintings that cost a fortune hung on

the walls. Takeiaki suddenly felt small and dizzy, he loosened his collar anxiously and walked towards the huge double doors at the end in the hall. Two men with grim faces stood on either side of the doors, opening them for him as he came towards them. The guard that had guided him left, and went back to his post downstairs.

The priest was in a small room that he completely ignored, he did not have the nerves to bother with details. Not tonight. The room had two more doors, one leading to Kenzu Nakamura, director of Nakamura Trading, and one which lead to Yoshiko Nakamura. He knocked. The door opened and another two security men came out and, without words, guided him inside, while closing the doors after him from the outside.

A woman dressed in business-wear from Armani sat comfortably behind a desk looking out through the gigantic windows overwiewing Tokyo. She was still beautiful, he could see that. The floor was carpeted expensively, there were sculptures all over the office and a huge bar-section. The light that illuminated the office seemed to have no source.

"I thought this day would come, Takeiaki" she said with a convincingly calm voice, still looking away from him and out into the city.

"So you know why I am here?" He held the Glock firmly with one hand disguised within his cloak.

"Of course. I killed your brother. You have tried to learn to live with it, but you can't. Not even praying helps for you, it's made it even worse - the word 'obsession' comes to mind. It has made your father hate you, and this in turn has or will inevitably make you hate yourself. And you will commit suicide. Unless, you can get even with me, kill me, do your vendetta, even if your religion goes against it. Killing is a sin, right? Or maybe you can justify killing me by quoting 'an eye for an eye'? "

The priest did not reply, wondering whether to ask how she knew all of this, his most personal secrets.

"How do I know all this, you ask," she continued "I have been watching you. Yes I have." She turned to face him, and she saw that he was about to start crying. "You wonder why I killed your brother? It was nothing much personal. He was great in bed and everything, but when I met a powerful man like Kenzu Nakamura, I knew I had to divorce your brother. We argued about it so I stabbed him with a screwdriver in his sleep." She paused briefly, her smile slightly askew. "You Takeiaki's have never quite understood the concept of power have you? Look at yourself. You think power is listening to people confess their sins, know secrets about twenty-or-so people. Maybe you feel that you own the church, whereas you have actually been a sort of spiritual janitor for thirtysomething years in a ordinary building, with nothing more special than a couple of altars. I have altars in my home." Takeiaki tried unsuccessfully to disbelieve this.

"I know what true power is, Takeiaki," She ran a finger across the surface of the desk, as if to check for dust. "I have it right here, in the palm of my hand. Once I killed your brother, I got married to Kenzu. Perhaps you didn't notice in the court, but it was Kenzu who got the case dismissed. He owned the whole court, from the judge to your pathetic family's attorney..." The worst thing was not what she said, but the calmness in which she said it. She sounded like the sort of person who could be tranquil while killing her mother.

Takeiaki drew his gun. He felt tears run down his cheek. He bit his teeth together, as to swallow his tears.

"So this is it," she said. "What will you do once you killed me? Continue priesthood? I don't think so," she took a few silent paces closer to him. "God would never listen to you, God lost faith in you many years ago, when you swore to kill me. It has made you a Judas," she laughed quietly, as to herself. "You started betraying your God at the same time you started believing in him."

The priest pulled the trigger and felt that he lost the grip of the gun. In less than a quarter of a second it had flown six metres and landed in the hand of Yoshiko, who currently and not surprisingly was smiling, like it had been drawn there by some incredible magnetic force.

"Takeiaki, I said I have power. True power: I can distort your sense of time and space, I know telepathy and telekenesis, I know all languages. I know all the military generals in Japan, all the diplomatic houses, and you think I will let myself be crushed by you, a deranged suicidal priest looking for his God through revenge?"

The priest fell to his knees, hands folded.

And was shot three times in the head.

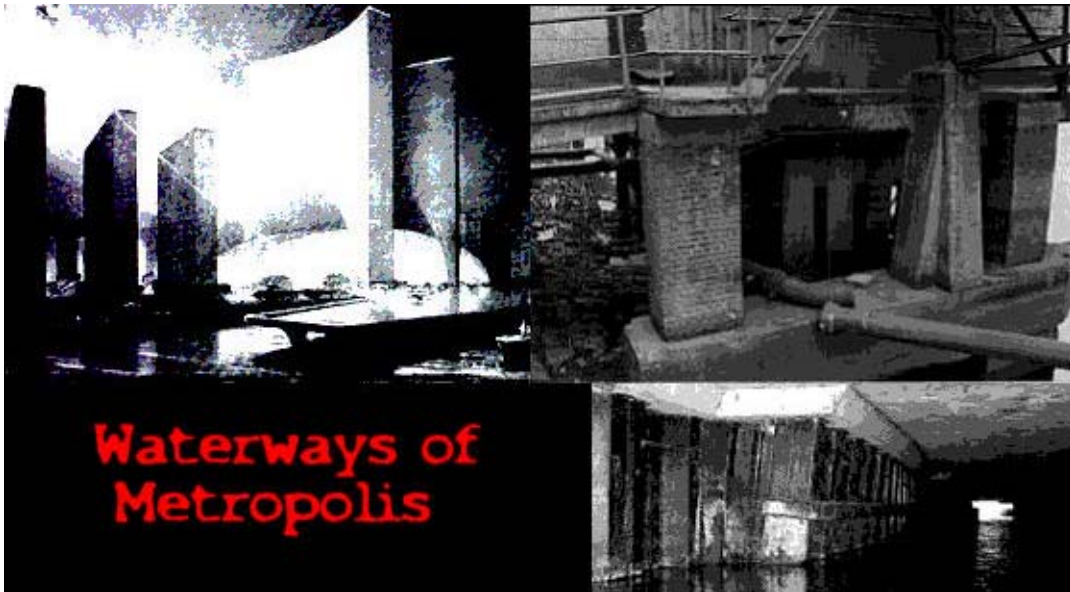
Yoshiko dialed the phone.

"Takeo Oshima, how may I be at service," said a man in the other end.

"It's me, Yoshiko. I have some redwine stains on my carpet that won't come off, and it's been smudged in with some pieces of cork. I was wondering if you knew someone to dispose of the empty bottle and get rid of the stains."

"Sure. I'll send over my best cleaner at once." He hung up.

"Power, yes. Sometimes you can only measure your power by the number of enemies." She looked out into the great shining city - and beyond.



## **Waterways of Metropolis Part 2**

**By PeterAmthor**

### **The Falls**

From the oily black skies, somewhere above the smog an endless stream of water flows from the sky. This has become known as The Falls. The filth ridden water carries with it anything or anyone who was unfortunate to get pulled through one of the many gates in Elysium that lead here. The fabric of space and time has been so altered that objects do not fall at the ever increasing high rate of speed, they reach a maximum speed equal to that as a fall from a 30 foot drop. Therefore most people who enter through this gate are unfortunate enough to live through it.

The areas where Falls are present are usually where several waterways intersect. Also it is usually where there is the presence of a large section of docks (see the docks write up). Many creatures lie in wait around the falls due to the chance of catching something or someone from the other side, for some it is for the purpose of food, others have more sinister purposes in mind.



## **The Tunnels**

Running beneath the great citadels of the Archons and below various parts of Metropolis are the tunnels. These are a maze of passages; overflow drains, spillovers, archaic sewage systems and water traps that stretch for miles without end underneath the eternal city. Each section of the Tunnels mimics the section of Metropolis that it flows under. Constantly looping in upon themselves, with several ending at whirlpools, metal grates and dead ends. Many have attempted to navigate these dark areas only to never be heard from again, although others seem to be able to enter and exit them without any trouble whatsoever.

Underneath Machine City there are several chemical drains constantly seeping waste materials into the waters, with electrical conduit stretching on for as far as one can see. Discarded machines are partially submerged with various portions rising out of the water as markers of much older times. Although nearly uninhabitable by anything organic there are a few roving bands of proto-techrones that reside in these dark passages. They huddle around chemical fires lit by the constant seepage of flammable materials and scavenge what they can. Every now and then a lone techrone makes its way into the dark either to retrieve some nearly forgotten machine or to investigate disturbances down below.

Deeper flowing tunnels may also border on hatching grounds of the Razides and some even go deep enough to reach Inferno. These seem to flow into various sections without rhyme or reason. Some even tell of seas located below the surface with their own unique inhabitants and structures.

## **The Damns of Machine City**

The dark factories of Machine City are always in a constant state of production, something that requires vast amounts of raw power. The techrones that run the factories have always used every resource they could to produce this power. They view the waterways and their unending current as just another source for the power they need.

In various areas through out the spider web of canals and flow tunnels that weave through the factories and facilities of Machine City are the damns. These damns vary in size, design and power output but are all the same in serving one singular functional and are constantly maintained. These structures close off specific channels and use the force of the flow created by the backup of water to turn the turbine engines within. The power generated by the damn is then usually used to feed nearby sections of the factories. Whenever more power is generated than needed a tower made of metal railing on the top of the structure lets loose an electrical discharge. Some of the larger damns are constantly producing an awe-inspiring display of electric pyrotechnics.

Some of these damns are also huge water reservoirs that store up vast amounts of water. Then let it slowly drains out, turning turbines located at the base of the reservoir. The

largest of these are visible for miles. Others are incased within buildings and structures that have been built on top and along side them over the centuries that have passed. These are usually used to power structures that only need power during certain periods or that need excess power at specific times. These include testing facilities and experimental equipment.

## **Incidents**

While traveling the waterways the players hear gunfire and combat ahead. Soon they are in a fog of smoke that reeks of gunpowder and burning bodies, as the fighting grows louder. Suddenly they find themselves between German WWI troops on one side of the river fighting British troops on the other. The characters have just drifted into The Ruins during a pitched battle.

A large plume of black smoke rises ahead of the characters as they travel down a rather large waterway. As they get closer they hear the sounds of prop driven airplanes and an occasional explosion. After rounding the edge of a building that is partially submerged they see a battleship consumed in flames and sinking. Overhead an occasional plane flies over and tracer rounds can be seen firing into the air in the distance. As they get closer bodies are becoming more common floating in the water all wearing US Seaman uniforms. Finally they begin to hear the yells of survivor begging for help. They have just came upon the scene of the sinking of the USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor. The players may actually cross over back into the illusion here (although in the wrong time period) or this may be an opportunity to add a new NPC or a creative PC to the group as a survivor of the attack.

# Talislanta: Midnight Realm Sourcebook



**Publisher:** Shooting Iron Designs - <http://www.shootingiron.com/>

**Author:** Stephan Micheal Sechi, Mark 'Tipop' Williams, Colin Chapman

**Cost:** \$27.95

**Pages:** 151 (preview copy)

**Year:** January 2004

**SKU:** TBA

**ISBN:** TBA

**Reviewed by:** Max Hattuer

## Artwork

Wonderful artwork has always been a staple within the Talislantan milieu, and it continues. Adam Black, Richard Wallace, Ron Spencer, Ed Hiel, Anson Maddocks, P.D. Breeding-Black, Mark Tedin, and Rick Emond are listed as the interior illustrators, with Adam Black also doing the cover work.

Of course, with those people doing the artwork, I would have been very surprised if it was not wonderful.

A few of the illustrations are repeated in the bestiary and in the archetypes section, which isn't bad, but I feel it should be mentioned.

The artwork of Talislanta is what sold me on the game in the first place, and the quality of the work has always impressed me, its nice to open up a book and say, "WOW!" and at first glance Midnight Realm does that.

## Layout

The layout is nice, and easy to read two column with page border format. Text is not too small, and not too big, which tells us that page count was not something Shooting Iron was after, nor do they wish us to strain our eyes.

Pages are white, with no background.

Flavor text is in the same gray scroll-look boxes that are used in Talislanta 4th Edition,

the layout is almost identical (the page border is different), nice to have the consistency.

Overall, a wonderful supplement to Talislanta, and other RPG's, that has a wealth of information and ideas pertaining to some of the greater mysteries of Talislanta and the Lower Planes.

## **Chapter 1: A Travelers Guide to the Midnight Realm**

The Midnight Realm is a place located "at a crossroads between the lower planes."

### **An Historic Overview**

A brief section on the original inhabitants of the Midnight Realm, what happened to them, and where they are now. Also gives some detail on the Great Cataclysm, and theories as to what may have been the cause...

The writers for Talislanta have always maintained that if you are running the game, it is your baby, and in Midnight Realm Sechi and crew give many ideas to draw from without any fear of stepping on metaplot, leaving plenty of room for campaign development.

### **Cyclopedia Of the Midnight Realm**

This section starts off with a beautiful map, with the locations clearly marked.

Following the Full-Page map are the descriptions of the locations, and in true Talislantan fashion, enough is left open to interpretation to let the GM do what he wants, but enough is told so that everyone is on the same page.

Places of Note include:

- The Cauldron** - a neutral meeting place between Tarterans
- Inferno** - a large volcano that spews forth molten iron in a great river
- Mount Ziggurat** - a tiered mountain that is shrouded in mystery
- The Threshold** - an interdimensional portal that leads to other planes of existence and many, many more...

### **Denizens of the Midnight Realm**

- Tarterans** - The most prolific inhabitants of the Midnight Realm. Half-Devils with horns and wings that strive on Social Status.
- Black Savants** - Seven foot tall beings from the land of Talislanta, searching for their lost brethren, much more information is given on them, but I won't spoil the surprises.
- Brood** - Hunters, slavers and soul-eaters that hail from the Dark Dimension, a vile species with living weapons and a grim outlook. Brings an interesting twist on the five senses. An completely alien race unrelated to Devils and Demons.
- Ebonites** - Spectral beings from the Underworld that can become substantial at will.

- Sepharans** - An ancient race of cultists from the Nether Realm, Sepharans have a 3rd eye with special powers and are covered in magical calligraphs.
- Zoab** - Repellent, half-larval beings hailing from a distant dimension.
- Devils** - More detailed information on the different types of Greater and Lesser Devils.

## **New Skills**

- Appraise (Souls)**
- Astromancy** - covers the creation of levitationals and astromantic globes
- Bloodstoning** - the skill of implanting soulstones to create permanent supernatural bond.
- Construct Clockwork**
- Cult Rituals (Sephar)**
- Demon Lore**
- Runefist** - Martial Art form practiced by the Sepharen Monks, moves trace calligraphs in thier patterns.
- Shadowstep** - a skill requiring precise control of corporeality, used by Ebonite Shadowwarriors
- Soul-Binding** - the practice of creating soulstones by binding a soul to a black diamond
- Soul-Trapping** - The skill of detecting and trapping souls for use in Soul-Binding, utilizing various means.
- Tarteran Biomancy** - having this skill allows the PC/NPC to create new lifeforms from old lifeforms, dangerous, grisly, and unpredictable.

## **New Magical Orders**

- Demon Eye (Sepharan)** - rules covering the usage of the Sepharans third eye.
- Symbology (Sepharan)** - the art of creating magical Calligraphs, known only to the Sepharan Cultists.

## **Midnight Realm Character Archetypes**

Tarteran Demon Hunter, Sepharan Cultist, Zoab Enforcer, Night Demon Mercenary and a more can be found in this section, although dominated by the numerous Tarteran archetypes, all of the other races are covered thoroughly.

The archetypes are laid out identical to the way they appear in the Talislanta 4th Edition rulebook, with one minor change...certain archetypes are presented with the basics, and notes are provided for variations on the archetype, for example, the Sepharan Cultist archetype has the attributes and skills listed normally, and a seperate area that lists the modifications for Monks, Fanatics and Symbolators.

This is a wonderful improvement, and I hope that Shooting Iron continues this trend for Talislanta.

## **Chapter 2: Midnight Realm Bestiary**

As would be expected, a wealth of information on Demons and Devils can be found in this section, including the different types and origins of each.

Also in this section, Flora and Fauna that can be found in the Midnight Realm and other places in the lower planes are detailed, with a few of the older monsters repeated here for completeness.

Each entry gives us a detailed look that explains what it is, and in some cases, why it is and how it came to be.

### **Chapter 3: Gamemasters Section**

A separate section for the GM, I like this, this should be standard practice in the industry. Contains:

- an overview of the Omniverse which details many of the planes of existence (lower, elemental, material, etc).
- A section detailing what happens to souls when someone dies, which comes in very handy when players start taking Soul-Trapping and Soul-Binding.
- Various ways to play the different races - the anti-hero, the avenger, the sycophant, etc
- Details on crossover campaigns utilising the Talislanta Continent...and other RPG's - very nice, and very well-done.
- Also gives explanations for types of scenarios that can be created for the Midnight Realm...plus a few actual adventure seeds.
- Lastly, a timeline of the Midnight realm is provided.

### **Chapter 4: Appendix**

•Equipment Details the unique equipment and items that can be found in the Midnight Realm, including the currencies used in trade.  
Soulstones and Soulmarks stand out as one is a black diamond bound with a soul, and the other is currency that was buried with the dead, and as such, became incorporeal and stayed with the soul of the deceased.

Tarteran Blades, Demonwards and Ancient artifacts are mentioned and described wonderfully in this section.

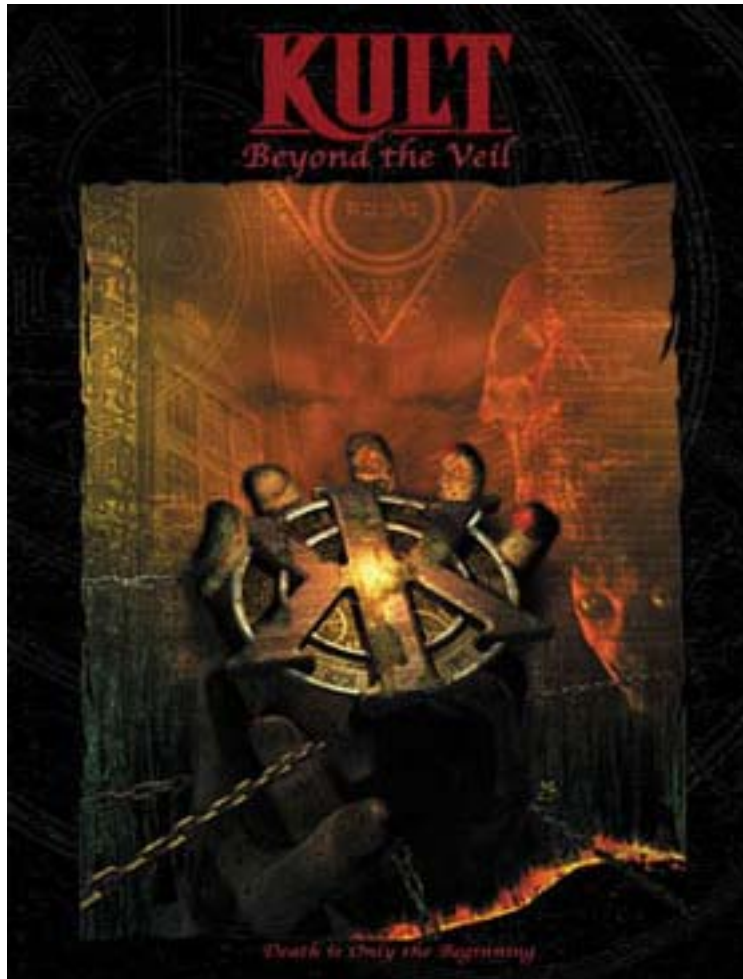
•Pronunciation Guide

A nice touch. With all of the various new races and names, this is very nice.

•Index

Another nice touch, I believe that all games need an index.

## Kult – Beyond the Veil



**Publisher:** Seventh Circle – [www.7emecercle.com](http://www.7emecercle.com)

**Author:** Various

**Cost:** \$35 US

**Pages:** 301

**Year:** 2004

**Reviewed by:** PeterAmthor

Beyond the Veil is the second English book released from Seventh Circle for the Kult RPG line. The first was a players guide called Rumours that came out over a year ago. Originally this book was to be the GMs guide but with the delay of its release it appears that they have instead turned it into a core rulebook for the game. Which is fine by me.

Originally this was said to be a hardback. But, according to their distributor, there was a mix-up in communication with the printer and it was done in soft cover instead. I'm not too overly concerned about this since 35 dollars for a 300+ role playing game is not a bad

price to pay in today's market.

First off the cover is quite nice looking with art by Didier Florentz. The back has a nice run of description about the theme of the game and the section of the book itself. Another blurb near the bottom states that this edition contains the complete Magic system including the Conjurer's guides. This is one excellent step up from the 2nd edition version of the book, which did not include the details of the magic system that provides a lot of the flavor to Kult. There is an inside flap for each cover, the front one lists the table of contents and the back lists the credits. I thought this was a neat little touch that ended up looking very well.

It is illustrated throughout in black and white with a lot of grayscale. Most of the art is stock from the previous editions and the collectible card game. The grayscale has an odd affect on various pieces that were originally used in full color on the card game. But by owning a complete set of the CCG and its expansion I will say that some of them look better in this medium than in full color. But there are a few that lose some appeal at the same time. The borders of every page are the same with a new design that tries to capture some of the mood of the game. It shows various occult objects, a partial skeleton and archways near the top. The amount of space it takes up is not that great and helps give a uniform look to the pages.

The layout is clean and simple. Standard double column with inserted pictures and charts. It stays consistent throughout so there is no variance.

Section one: The Lie.

This part of the book begins with a general description of the game world a quick overview of the basics of the cosmology. A lot of this is stock, word for word, from previous editions. But it is necessary and is probably about as well written as one could get. The rest of the section covers character creation, how skill checks work, combat and experience. Everything needed, system wise, to run the game is present so no one should have a problem in that area.

Here is a quick overview of the game mechanics. Characters have a skill rating from 1 to 20, the goal is to roll a twenty sided die under that number. The further under the number the better you did. There are also rules for automatic successes, perfect and disastrous rolls. Combat works pretty much the same way except you check the difference on a chart for a bonus or negative to a weapons DEF stat, this helps determine the amount of damage done.

There are also advantages and disadvantages. Advantages are beneficial to your character in the game and mentally while the disadvantages are detrimental to your character in both aspects. They do this by affecting the characters mental balance. The higher you go the more stable minded they are with a better chance of controlling themselves. While the lower they are the more unstable the characters become mentally and their control continues to slip away.



I do have a few complaints in this section though. One is the presence of only nine archetypes. Although this is remedied on the Seventh Circle website with a pdf download of fourteen more. The skill list is incomplete to match the character sheet provided in the book. Basically the character sheet is the one from Rumours that had a more extensive skill list. Either the character sheet could've been changed or those skill descriptions included.

## Section two: The Rumors.

In this section we have the details of creating characters that are beyond the normal level of humanity. They purchase various powers at the cost of gaining limitations. This enables the creation of such things such as vampires, werewolves or an endless variety of creatures.

After that is an area talking about how to handle terrifying events and how they affect the characters themselves. When confronted with terror or something completely out of the laws of reality there is a chance that the mind of the PC could be affected. This could put them into a state of shock, cause them to flee in terror or drop their mental balance lower. When ones mental balance starts dropping there is a chance of gaining new disadvantages or, if they are already down pretty low, physical changes could occur. Also the lower your mental balance the harder it is to cope with some of these events, so be wary.

Following that is the section covering a lot more rules of damage. This is mostly the damage that occurs from things such as electrocution, suffocation, fire, smoke, falling and others. Also covered here are the rules for drugs and poisons.

Time and travel covers how to work time scale within the game. From actions to combat rounds to how much distance a character can cover. General information in other words.

Finally there is the section covering magic. In the Kult world magic works through long and complicated rituals that test the mind and body of the caster. This is no easy feat and those who practice magic are dedicated to it more than anything else in their lives. It all falls into five categories called the Lore's, they are as follows: Death, Time/Space, Passion, Madness and Dream. I feel that the magic an essential element if just to get the person running the game into the right mind set of the setting. Not only did they include the complete system in this edition, but they also included all the extra material that was released in the Conjurers Guides for 2nd edition.

Besides the Lore's you also have seven occult sciences that help the conjurers unravel the way the world works. Each has their own special abilities and information on how to use them in the game. Here there are also eleven more archetypes for those who wish to play a ritualist.

Each ritual is detailed with information on the necessary equipment, protective circles, gestures, visualization and much more needed to perform them. The more the ritual dose

the longer it takes for a character to perform. The longer it takes to perform the more of a toll it takes on the conjurer's body through endurance loss.

### Section three: The Truth

Finally is the section of the book that lays out the true reality of the world of Kult. I will not go into great detail here because it may take away some of the surprise of new players. But I will cover a few basics.

The Illusion. Mankind is trapped within a prison that we cannot see, one that exists all around us always. We see only what we are supposed to see. But that prison is starting to have cracks in its walls. The true reality is being exposed a little at a time and there are those who can find their way through them.

Metropolis, the eternal city. Our former home, a city that all cities are based off of since it is engrained within our subconscious, one that we want to reclaim. It's streets are endless, it's dangers are overwhelming at times, but in it are the secrets that may set us free.

Inferno. Where are souls go after we die. The hell where our former memories are purged from our minds so we can be reborn into the world.

The Demiurge. The god who imprisoned us in the Illusion long ago, who is now missing, and without him the illusion crumbles. Astaroth the Demiurges dark half, the ruler of Inferno, who hates mankind. The Archons, former servants of the Demiurge, who are now fighting among each other to see who will become the new leader among them. The Death Angels, the opposites of the Archons, who fight a similar battle as their counterparts.

There are various creatures that exist between the various worlds. Some stalk us down, while others wish to rule over us, each with their own end goals. A few have the ability to warp the Illusion itself.

Finally there is the truth of humanity. The fact that we all used to be gods in our own rights, with powers beyond anything we could imagine. There are those who have found their lost divinity called the Awakened.

All of the detail of the world and its creatures is crammed, and I mean crammed, into eighty or so pages. There is plenty here for source material to run an endless amount of games with, all with very little chance of repetition. It is all quite a read and it will take some time to take it all in.

Following all of this there is a gamemasters section on how to run the game itself. With notes on how to handle combat, rules, horror affects and other such things. Information on how to set up and run a campaign and keep it flowing. Finally ending with an introductory adventure called 'Frozen Moments' that was originally presented in the 2nd edition rulebook.

A few problems to note at the end.

There is no index. With a world with this much detail, creatures, places and other information an index is almost a necessity. I feel that this will make it a little tougher on first time Kult GM's using this book.

The character sheet. There are numerous problems with the character sheet itself. First off is the presence of skills that are not in the book as noted earlier. The weapon slots are set up for the first edition combat rules that don't use the DEF stat. In the armor section there aren't slots for the protection type of the armor. Add into that the gray scale pictures in the background make the character sheet very photocopy unfriendly. But you can use a character sheet from the 2nd edition rules since they are fully compatible. These are available on a few Kult fan sites online.

So in the end I recommend this book to anybody interested playing in this type of dark horror game. By the rules it can be used to run several types of horror from splatter punk to psychological terror. The rules are complete and the few errors here and there do not break the system or even come close to it.



Lab by Jacinto Quesnel (jhas777)

Links of note.

This section will contain links back to the personal or favorite sites that contributors to Inner Voice suggest. Want a link to your site to appear in an issue of Inner Voice? Well then submit some material and include a note letting us know about the link you want added it. It's that easy.



[www.maxhattuer.com](http://www.maxhattuer.com)

PsychoThriller: a collection of articles for various RPGs, most notably for Sla Industries, Kult and a growing collection of Talislanta material.



<http://peteramthor.darkgod.net>

Voices in my Head: personal site of PeterAmthor.



<http://www.shinies.net/village/html/>

The Village: a gaming site ran by Derek Stoelting aka Oaxaca.



<http://www.kult-rpg.com>

Fan based support for the Kult RPG. Downloads, forums and more.



<http://jhas777.deviantart.com>

Art gallery of Jacinto Quesnel (Jhas777).

## Notes at the end.

Well that's it for the second issue of Inner Voice. Hope you enjoyed what was offered up inside. Remember to check out the Table of contents page for the link to the Inner Voice website. Also make sure to use the email provided there to send us back some thoughts on what you think of Inner Voice so far.

Also be sure to direct a few other people towards this little ezine if you don't mind. The more readers the better.

Next issue:

**Waterways of Metropolis** concludes

**All at Once** continues

**Story out of Sequence** continues

**FreeForm RPG System** A complete, quick and simple role playing game system.

More art from **Jacinto Quesnel**

**Ultimate Fantastic Four** review

Also whatever submissions we get between now and then.